Summary of the 2002-2003 Clandestine Drug Laboratory Remediation Survey

California Environmental Protection Agency

Department of Toxic Substances Control

Drug Lab Remediation & Time Critical Removals Unit

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Preface

The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) assumed a lead role in providing emergency hazardous materials removal support at illegal drug labs seized by State and local enforcement officials in Fiscal Year 95/96. During the initial year in this role drug lab removal activity vastly exceeded both DTSC and enforcement agency expectations. A total of 965 removals were completed in the first year. Most of these removals were hydriodic acid/red phosphorous methamphetamine (meth) labs. DTSC's meth lab removal activities have risen dramatically over the years, reaching a peak of 2,208 labs in FY 01/02. Providing this level of support now requires 22 staff and approximately $5,000,000 in contract funds per year to manage a system that operates 24 hours per day, 7 days a week.

These emergency removal actions are an extremely important first step in the overall effort to clean up illegal meth labs. However, these initial actions are limited to removing hazardous substances and contaminated materials that pose an immediate threat to public health and/or the environment. Materials typically removed on an emergency basis include bulk lab chemicals, contaminated lab equipment, heavily contaminated items within residences such as carpeting and furniture, containers of waste materials, and waste materials found on the ground surface or in pits on the lab site.

Unfortunately, emergency removals do not completely cleanup illegal meth lab sites. Significant levels of meth lab-related contamination can remain throughout a lab after the initial removal has been completed. It is not uncommon for contamination to be found throughout residential structures. It has been detected on and within floors, carpeting, cabinets, furniture, and other surfaces. In addition ventilation systems, septic systems, disposal pits, and soils in general. Handling these types of contamination from a full site remediation standpoint poses a significant challenge to agencies, homeowners, and contractors, particularly in the area of carrying out remediation of structures. Data on contaminants of concern are very limited and health-based cleanup standards do not currently exist. In addition, the applicability of procedures used for sampling and analysis of contaminants at traditional hazardous substances release sites relative to investigating residences contaminated by drug lab activity is not well understood at this time.

The State of California does not currently have procedures or standards for complete cleanup of meth lab sites. This national survey of government agencies was California's effort to determine how other states are handling meth lab site remediation. Survey results have been tabulated and summarized to facilitate identification of state and local agencies that remediate former meth labs and may have established procedures and/or standards. Some states, such as Washington and Oregon, have structured programs that have been in operation for several years. Many other states are still struggling with establishing programs to address the rapidly expanding number of meth labs that are being seized each year. Procedures implemented by other states in the remediation of methamphetamine labs have been consolidated in this survey. It is hoped that this survey will begin to consolidate lab remediation information on a national basis so that all states trying to deal with this difficult problem can learn from the experiences of others and address this epidemic.

Acknowledgement

This survey was developed under the direction of Don Plain, Chief, of DTSC's Emergency Response and Special Projects Branch and Daniel V. Ziarkowski, Chief, Drug Lab Remediation and Time Critical Removals Unit. Design, implementation, and documentation of this survey were through the dedicated efforts of Ms. Angela Singh, Mr. Matthew Vona, and Ms. Sarah Scott, Drug Lab Remediation and Time Critical Removals Unit.

We would like to thank all of the individuals who participated in this survey as they continue to address the many challenging issues posed by former methamphetamine laboratories.

Purpose of the Survey

DTSC initiated a national survey to identify states that have active meth lab assessment and remediation programs. Questions were posed to appropriate officials who would provide insight into a state's meth lab assessment and remediation program. The survey did not focus on the law enforcement issues associated with meth labs.

Results of this survey will be used to determine the magnitude of the meth lab problem and to identify common approaches, if any, that states are using to conduct meth lab assessment and remediation. In addition, information collected in this survey will help DTSC to clarify common problems associated with meth labs that DTSC could pursue via specific research projects. DTSC's long term goal is to provide scientifically defensible assessment and remediation procedures, and develop health based cleanup standards for significant chemicals of concern.

Target Audience

DTSC contacted each state environmental health department as the first step in determining if a state had an active meth lab assessment and remediation program, and to identify the individuals with the most knowledge on that program. While states with active meth lab assessment and remediation programs were easy to identify, some states without a state program referred DTSC to county health officials who have or are trying to develop county programs. Some states with meth labs, but no active remediation program referred DTSC to law enforcement officials. Finally, some state officials indicated their state does not have meth labs. Every attempt was made to identify and contact the person(s) with the greatest understanding of the meth lab problem within that state, or the person who has a unique knowledge of the meth lab problem.

Who Responded to the Survey

All 50 states were contacted, but 17 either felt that they could not directly contribute to the survey, or referred to other agencies. The survey was sent to 67 state and county health departments and law enforcement agencies nationwide, with 66 responding. Those states that were represented in the survey are listed below. A detailed list of respondents is also appended at the end of this report. It should be noted that not all respondents responded to all of the questions. For instance, if a respondent stated that they did not deal with meth labs at all, they were not subsequently asked what types of labs they encountered most often. As a consequence of this, many of the questions were answered by a much smaller number of respondents than the total number responding to the survey in its entirety. This summary simply reports the raw percentage of responses relative to the number of people who have responded to each question. It is recommended that anyone needing an in depth statistical analysis of the responses to this survey conduct their own analysis of the raw data.

Table 1. States that responded to the survey

Alaska	Minnesota	South Dakota	Kansas	Pennsylvania
California	Mississippi	Tennessee	Kentucky	
Colorado	Missouri	Texas	Maryland	
Florida	Montana	Utah	Michigan	
Georgia	New Jersey	Vermont	Nevada	
Hawaii	North Dakota	Washington	New York	
Idaho	Nebraska	Wisconsin	Oklahoma	
Illinois	New Mexico	Iowa	Oregon	

What types of labs are encountered, where are they found, and how many are encountered on an annual basis?

Respondents that dealt with methamphetamine laboratories were asked to identify the type of clandestine laboratories encountered. Of the 53 respondents, 87% had dealt with Red Phosphorus/Hydriodic Acid (Small Scale), 68% dealt with the Nazi (Lithium/Ammonia) method, 28% dealt with the Red Phosphorus/Hydriodic Acid (Large Scale), 13% dealt with the Phenyl-2-Propanone method, and 19% sited Other as a response (Table 2). Of these, 39 respondents ranked by percentage those locations where the meth labs they encountered were located. Single family homes at forty-nine percent made up the largest single percentage, followed by Other, Vehicles, Apartment Complexes, Motels/Hotels, Duplexes, and Storage Units respectively (Table 3). When these respondents were asked how many labs the agencies encountered, 13 % reported 0-10, 17% reported 11-50, 22% reported 51-100, 20% reported 101-200, 17 % reported 200-500 and 11% reported 500 or more (Table 4).

Table 2. Types of meth labs commonly encountered

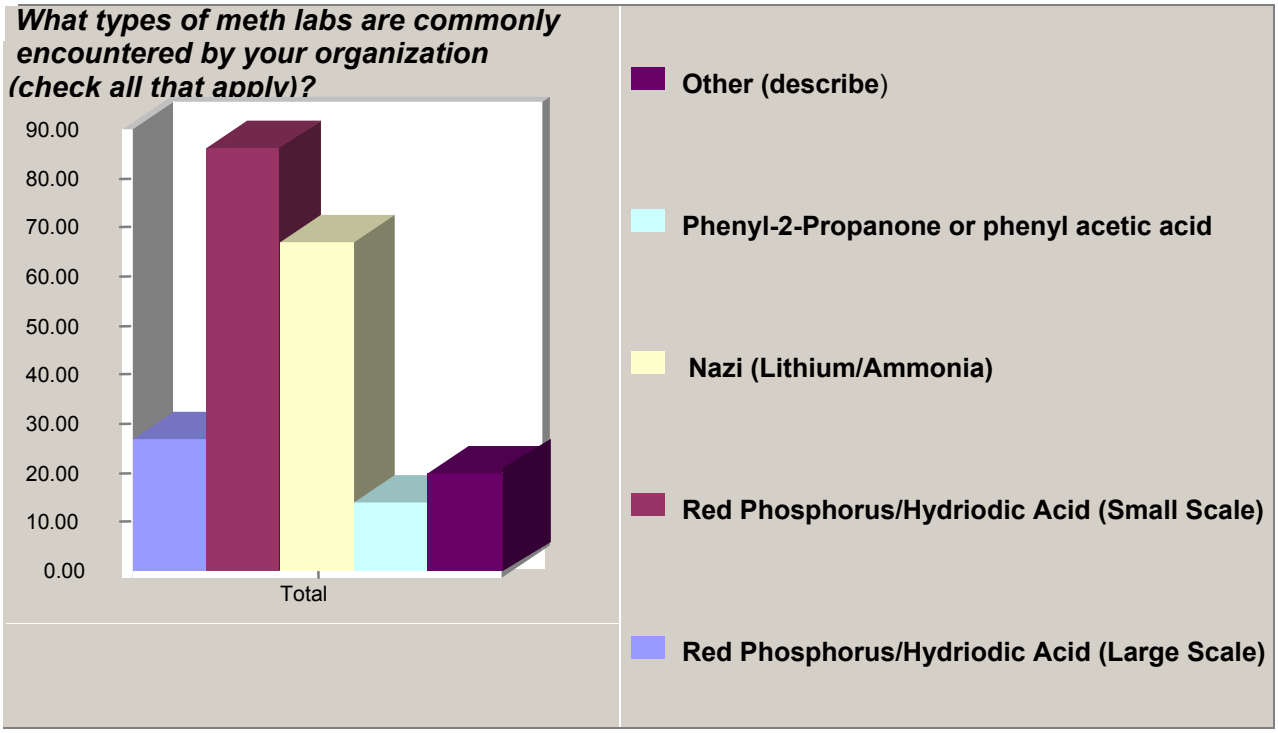
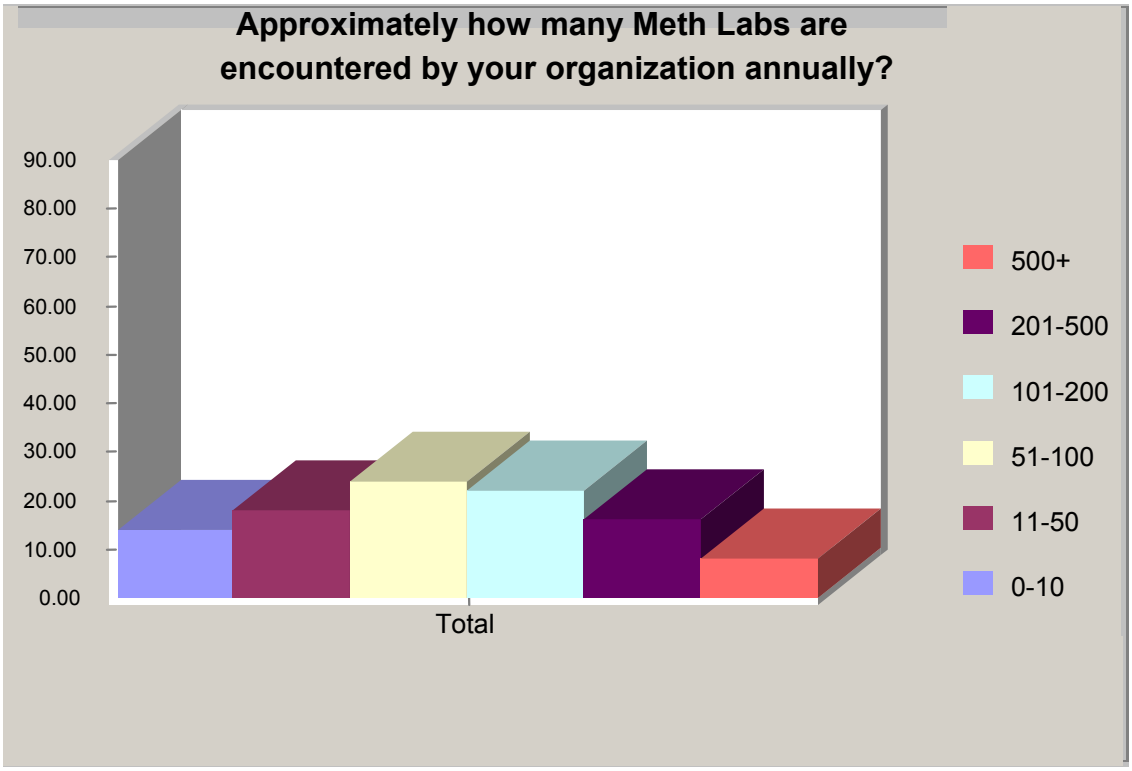


Table 3. Typical locations of meth labs

Where are the Meth Labs found that you typically deal with?	Mean Percentage
Single Family Homes	49%
Other	17%
Vehicles	16%
Apartment Complexes	14%
Motels/Hotels	11%
Duplexes	6%

Table 4. Number of meth labs encountered annually



Initial organizational response to methamphetamine laboratories

When asked if their organization was involved in the initial response to meth laboratories, 56% of the respondents reported yes. When these respondents were asked if their organization performed assessments of seized meth labs, 81% reported that they did. When asked if their organization has a standard Health & Safety Plan which deals specifically with the safety issues at methamphetamine laboratories, 85% reported they did (Table 5).

Table 5. Organizations with established Health and Safety Plans specific to meth labs

Representatives answering yes to "Does your organization have an established Health and Safety Plan which deals specifically with the safety issues at Meth Labs?"		
Agency	**City**	**State**
Kern County Environmental Health Department	Bakersfield	California
Merced County Environmental Health	Merced	California
National Jewish Medical and Research Center	Denver	Colorado
State of Hawaii, Narcotics Enforcement Division	Honolulu	Hawaii
Kansas Department of Health & Environment - Meth Lab Cleanup Program	Topeka	Kansas
Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI)	Wichita	Kansas
Sedgwick County Sheriff's Department	Wichita	Kansas
Kentucky State Police	Bowling Green	Kentucky
Michigan State Police - Methamphetamine Investigation Team	Lansing	Michigan
Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics	Jackson	Mississippi
Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department	Lincoln	Nebraska
Washoe County District Health Department	Reno	Nevada
Oregon State Police	Salem	Oregon
Pennsylvania State Police	Harrisburg	Pennsylvania
South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigations	Sioux Falls	South Dakota
Grayson County Environmental Protection Department	Sherman	Texas
Salt Lake Valley Health Department	Murray	Utah
Spokane Regional Health District	Spokane	Washington
Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department	Tacoma	Washington

Preliminary site assessments at former laboratories

When asked if preliminary site assessments where conducted to determine if remedial action is needed, 53% responded Yes and 47% responded No (Table 6). When asked if their organization has established criteria for site assessments, 55% responded Yes and 45% responded No (Table 7). When asked how their organization determined if remedial action needed to be taken, 97% reported the use of visual analysis, 53% reported the use of field sampling and laboratory analysis, and 3% reported that no determination was being made. When asked if their organization remediated meth labs, 93% responded No and 7% responded that they did.

Table 6. Organizations performing site assessments to determine remedial action needs

Representatives answering yes to "Does your organization perform preliminary site assessments to determine if remedial action is needed?"		
Agency	**City**	**State**
Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation	Anchorage	Alaska
Merced County Environmental Health	Merced	California
Kern County Environmental Health Department	Bakersfield	California
Los Angeles County Fire Department, Health Hazardous Materials Division	Commerce	California
Yuba County Office of Emergency Services	Marysville	California
Tulare County Environmental Health	Visalia	California
San Benito County Environmental Health Division	Hollister	California
Illinois Department of Public Health	Springfield	Illinois
Kansas Department of Health & Environment - Meth Lab Cleanup Program	Topeka	Kansas
Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI)	Wichita	Kansas
Sedgwick County Sheriff's Department	Wichita	Kansas
Montana Department of Environmental Quality	Helena	Montana
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection	Trenton	New Jersey
Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department	Lincoln	Nebraska
Washoe County District Health Department	Reno	Nevada
Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality	Oklahoma City	Oklahoma
Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation	Oklahoma City	Oklahoma
Oregon State Police	Salem	Oregon
South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation	Sioux Falls	South Dakota
Grayson County Environmental Protection Department	Sherman	Texas
Retired/ Salt Lake Valley Health Department	Salt Lake City	Utah
Salt Lake Valley Health Department	Murray	Utah
Certified Decontamination	West Jordan	Utah
Utah County Health Department	Provo	Utah
Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation	Waterbury	Vermont
Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department	Tacoma	Washington
Washington State Department of Health	Olympia	Washington
Public Health - Seattle & King County	Seattle	Washington
Spokane Regional Health District	Spokane	Washington
Wisconsin Department of Health & Family Services	Madison	Wisconsin
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	Madison	Wisconsin

Table 7. Organizations with established criteria for site assessments

Representatives answering yes to "Does your organization have established criteria for site assessments?"		
Agency	**City**	**State**
Merced County Environmental Health	Merced	California
Kern County Environmental Health Department	Bakersfield	California
Tulare County Environmental Health	Visalia	California
San Benito County Environmental Health Division	Hollister	California
Sedgwick County Sheriff's Department	Wichita	Kansas
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection	Trenton	New Jersey
Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department	Lincoln	Nebraska
Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality	Oklahoma City	Oklahoma
Oregon State Police	Salem	Oregon
South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation	Sioux Falls	South Dakota
Salt Lake Valley Health Department	Murray	Utah
Certified Decontamination	West Jordan	Utah
Washington State Department of Health	Olympia	Washington
Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department	Tacoma	Washington
Public Health - Seattle & King County	Seattle	Washington
Spokane Regional Health District	Spokane	Washington
Wisconsin Department of Health & Family Services	Madison	Wisconsin

Collecting samples from former Methamphetamine Laboratories

Organizations were asked if they collect samples from meth labs to determine the extent of contamination, 36% responded that they did. When asked if empirical data were collected to validate these sampling methods, 89% responded that they do not collect the data. When asked if they maintained a Quality Assurance/Quality Control Plan to aid in sampling these sites, 14% reported that they did (Table 8). When asked if a Sampling and Analysis Plan was used to guide sampling sites, only 14% indicated yes (Table 9). 71% of respondents indicated that they required certified or accredited laboratories for analysis of samples taken from methamphetamine laboratories. When asked what sampling methods were used, 74% indicated soil sampling, 68% indicated water sampling, 63% indicated surface sampling, and 26% indicated air sampling and/or other. When those respondents who took air samples were asked if they had developed any air monitoring techniques for this specific purpose, only Kern County Environmental Health in Bakersfield, California responded that they had. When asked if their organization took samples from P-traps located underneath sinks, 23% responded Yes and 77% responded No. When asked if they sampled from the septic systems or sewer clean-outs, 46% responded Yes and 54% responded No. When asked if they sample surface and/or groundwater, 85% responded Yes (Table 10).

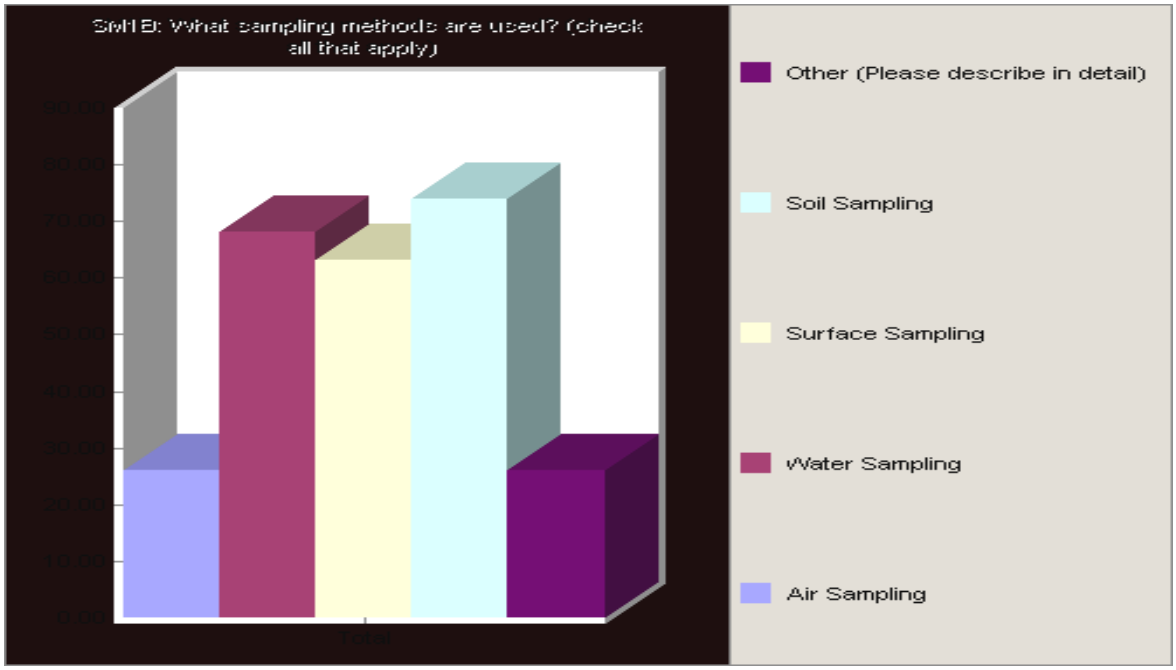
Table 8. Organizations that developed Quality Assurance/Quality Control plan

Respondents answering yes to, "Has your organization developed a Quality Assurance/Quality Control Plan to aid in sampling these sites?"		
Agency	**City**	**State**
Kansas Department of Health & Environment - Meth Lab Cleanup Program	Topeka	Kansas
Washington State Department of Health	Olympia	Washington
Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department	Tacoma	Washington

Table 9. Organizations that developed a Sample and Analysis plan

Respondents answering yes to, "Has your organization developed a Sample and Analysis Plan to aid in sampling these sites?"		
Agency	**City**	**State**
National Jewish Medical and Research Center	Denver	Colorado
Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department	Tacoma	Washington
Spokane Regional Health District	Spokane	Washington

Table 10. Types of sampling methods used



Remediation of Former Methamphetamine Laboratories

Cleaning Procedures (general)

When asked if they remediated former meth labs, 22% replied that they do. Twenty-nine percent have conducted studies to validate cleaning procedures and 43% maintain a written cleaning procedure (Table 11). When those that did not have cleaning procedures were asked if their organization was attempting to establish them, 50% responded that they were. When asked if their cleaning procedures varied depending upon the method of manufacture used at the clandestine laboratory two out of sixty-five responded no, with all others declining to respond.

Table 11. Organizations that maintain remediation procedures

Respondents answering yes to, "Does your organization maintain a procedure for the remediation of Meth Lab Sites?"		
Agency	**City**	**State**
Kansas Dept of Health & Environment - Meth Lab Cleanup Program	Topeka	Kansas
Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department	Lincoln	Nebraska
Certified Decontamination	West Jordan	Utah

Cleaning Walls

When asked how they remediate walls with visible contamination, 43% reported that they decontaminate in some manner, 29% reported that they repaint, and 71% reported that they remove the walls. When asked how they remediate walls without visible contamination, 57% responded that they decontaminate and 43% responded that they repaint.

Cleaning Floors

Respondents were presented with several choices in representing the cleaning materials and procedures they use in order to clean contaminated surfaces. When asked how they remediate carpets with visible contamination, 86% stated that they removed them and 14% said that they bleached them. When asked how carpets without visible contamination are remediated, 57% said that they were shampooed, 29% said they were removed or treated with baking soda, and 14% referenced Other. For linoleum with visible contamination, 71% would remove them, 14% stated that they would shampoo or wash them, and 14% would bleach them. For linoleum floors without visible contamination 71% would wash them, 29% would use a baking soda rinse or bleach, and 43% sited Other. For hardwood with visible contamination 43% would wash them, 71% would remove them, 14% would use a bleach and/or baking soda rinse, and 43% indicated Other. For hardwood without visible contamination, 57% would wash them, 14% would perform a bleach or baking soda rinse, and 57% cited Other.

Disposal of Materials

Organizations were asked where they disposed of contaminated soil and building materials, 57% said municipal landfills, and 43% said hazardous waste disposal facilities. When asked how the waste was classified, 14% said that it was 'always' considered hazardous, 43% segregated the waste, and 43% cited Other.

Cleanup Standards, Guidelines, and Chemicals of Concern

Only 19% of the respondents stated that they had established cleanup standards (Table 12). When these respondents were asked if they were considering adding chemicals (other than methamphetamine) to their list of chemicals of concern, only 27% reported that they were doing so. When asked if their organization was attempting to establish a cleanup standard or advisory threshold limit, 20% said that they were. When asked if guidelines were currently in place, 52% said that there were.

Table 12. Organizations with cleanup standards for meth labs

Representatives answering yes to "Has your organization established cleanup standards for Meth Labs?"		
Agency	**City**	**State**
Merced County-Division of Environmental Health	Merced	California
Sedgwick County Sheriff's Department	Wichita	Kansas
Minnesota Department of Health	Saint Paul	Minnesota
Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department	Lincoln	Nebraska
Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation	Oklahoma City	Oklahoma
Oregon Department of Human Services	Portland	Oregon
Oak Ridge National Laboratory	Oak Ridge	Tennessee
Salt Lake Valley Health Department	Murray	Utah
Retired/ Salt Lake Valley Health Department	Salt Lake City	Utah
Washington State Department of Health	Olympia	Washington
Public Health - Seattle & King County	Seattle	Washington
Spokane Regional Health District	Spokane	Washington

Financial Support for Methamphetamine Laboratory Remediation

Respondents were asked what the average cost of remediation was in their jurisdiction. The average cost reported was $5,215.00. The single highest average cost was reported to be $10,000 and the single lowest was $350.

Reoccupation of Former Methamphetamine Laboratories

Respondents were asked if they had dealt with issues of re-occupancy, 51% of the respondents reported that they did. Respondents were then asked if residents were ever allowed to re-occupy the former meth labs prior to remediation with 24% responding never, 45% responding rarely, 28% responding often, and only 3% responding always (Table 13). When asked if the re-occupancy was based on cleanup standards 52% said that it was. When asked to indicate the frequency which properties were re-occupied, 10% stated rarely, 66% stated often, and 24% stated always. When asked if occupants were given any information regarding the concerns associated with meth labs, 62% stated that they were (Table 14).

Table 13. Reoccupation of former meth labs prior to remediation

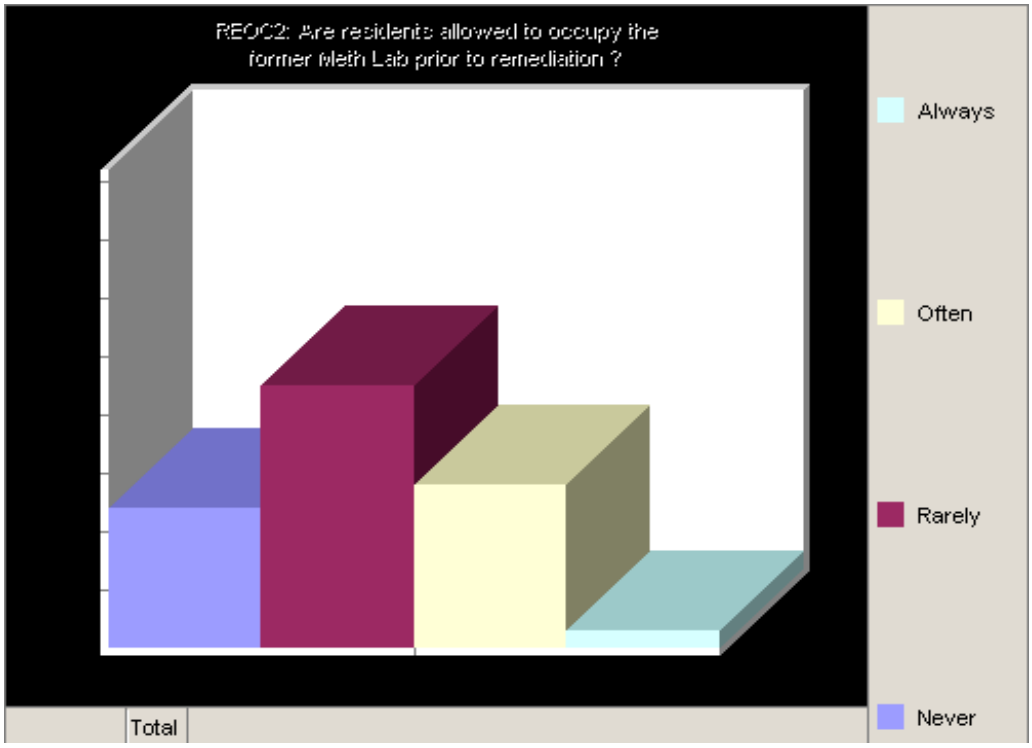


Table 14. Organizations that provide information concerning Meth labs

Respondents answering yes to, "Are occupants given any information regarding the concerns associated with Meth labs?"		
Agency	**City**	**State**
Los Angeles County Fire Department, Health Hazardous Materials Division	Commerce	California
Kern County Environmental Health Department	Bakersfield	California
Tulare County Environmental Health	Visalia	California
Illinois Department of Public Health	Springfield	Illinois
Kansas Department of Health & Environment - Meth Lab Cleanup Program	Topeka	Kansas
Michigan State Police-Methamphetamine Investigation Team	Lansing	Michigan
Minnesota Department of Health	Saint Paul	Minnesota
Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services	Jefferson City	Missouri
Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department	Lincoln	Nebraska
Washoe County District Health Department	Reno	Nevada
Oregon Department of Human Services	Portland	Oregon
Tennessee Department of Children's Services	Cookeville	Tennessee
Certified Decontamination	West Jordan	Utah
Salt Lake Valley Health Department	Murray	Utah
Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department	Tacoma	Washington
Washington State Department of Health	Olympia	Washington
Spokane Regional Health District	Spokane	Washington
Public Health - Seattle & King County	Seattle	Washington
Wisconsin Department of Health & Family Services	Madison	Wisconsin

Adverse Health Effects from Methamphetamine Laboratories

Fifty-seven percent of the respondents stated that the county health department was typically notified when a lab was discovered. When asked if they had knowledge of meth lab exposures resulting in adverse heath effects, 37% of the respondents stated that they did. Only fourteen percent of agencies were aware of any specific health complaints being made after reoccupation of meth labs. Twenty-nine percent of the respondents stated that data were being collected from adults or children removed from meth labs. Only two respondents were aware of any follow-up studies being conducted on these victims/perpetrators.

Access and Disclosure Issues

Sixty-eight percent of respondents stated that they did not address access and disclosure issues (Table 15). Sixty-one percent of the respondents stated that meth labs were secured against unauthorized re-entry until determined fit for use. Fifty-six percent of the respondents stated that they did not enforce fence and post orders, while the other 44% did. Roughly half (56%) of the respondents stated that notices remain on the title or record of property (Table 16). When asked if property owners were required to disclose previous meth lab activity before selling or renting property, exactly half of the respondents stated yes.

Table 15. Organization addressing access and disclosure issues

Respondents answering yes to, "Does your agency address access and disclosure issues?"		
Agency	**City**	**State**
Merced County Environmental Health	Merced	California
Kern County Environmental Health Department	Bakersfield	California
Tulare County Environmental Health	Visalia	California
San Benito County Environmental Health Division	Hollister	California
Merced County-Division of Environmental Health	Merced	California
Kansas Department of Health & Environment - Meth Lab Cleanup Program	Topeka	Kansas
Kentucky State Police	Bowling Green	Kentucky
Minnesota Department of Health	Saint Paul	Minnesota
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection	Trenton	New Jersey
Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department	Lincoln	Nebraska
Oregon Department of Human Services	Portland	Oregon
South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation	Sioux Falls	South Dakota
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Region 4	Fort Worth	Texas
Utah County Health Department	Provo	Utah
Certified Decontamination	West Jordan	Utah
Public Health - Seattle & King County	Seattle	Washington
Spokane Regional Health District	Spokane	Washington
Wisconsin Department of Health & Family Services	Madison	Wisconsin

Table 16. Organizations that post notices on title or record of property

Respondents answering yes to, "Do any notices remain on the title or record of the property?"		
Agency	**City**	**State**
Merced County Environmental Health	Merced	California
Tulare County Environmental Health	Visalia	California
San Benito County Environmental Health Division	Hollister	California
Kansas Department of Health & Environment - Meth Lab Cleanup Program	Topeka	Kansas
Minnesota Department of Health	Saint Paul	Minnesota
South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigations	Sioux Falls	South Dakota
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Region 4	Fort Worth	Texas
Public Health - Seattle & King County	Seattle	Washington
Spokane Regional Health District	Spokane	Washington
Wisconsin Department of Health & Family Services	Madison	Wisconsin

Studies and Research

When asked if their organization has funded or participated in any studies addressing methamphetamine issues, only 12% responded that they had (Table 17). When asked if their organization had participated in any controlled meth cooks, 86% had responded that they had (Table 18).

Table 17. Organizations that funded or participated in studies addressing meth issues

Respondents answering yes to, "Has your organization funded or participated in any studies addressing methamphetamine issues?"		
Agency	**City**	**State**
Tulare County Environmental Health	Visalia	California
National Jewish Medical and Research Center	Denver	Colorado
Sedgwick County Sheriff's Department	Wichita	Kansas
Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI)	Wichita	Kansas
Michigan State Police	Lansing	Michigan
State of New Mexico Environment Department	Santa Fe	New Mexico
Oregon Department of Human Services	Portland	Oregon
Washington State Department of Health	Olympia	Washington

Table 18. Organizations participating in controlled meth cooks

Respondents answering yes to, "Has your organization participated in any controlled Meth cooks?"		
Agency	**City**	**State**
National Jewish Medical and Research Center	Denver	Colorado
Sedgwick County Sheriff's Department	Wichita	Kansas
Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI)	Wichita	Kansas
Michigan State Police	Lansing	Michigan
State of New Mexico Environment Department	Santa Fe	New Mexico

Public Communication and Media

When asked what types of public awareness communications are used to educate the community of possible or current health risks related to clandestine laboratories, 46% reported fact sheets, 37% utilized community meetings, 46% utilized web pages, and 21% reported using none. When asked if their state had current or pending legislation regarding meth labs, 51% stated that they did.

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